

## [A. G. (Gus) Hartridge]

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A. G. [Hartridge?].

Lawyer.

211 Hilderbrandt Bldg.

Jacksonville,

Florida.

Rose Shepherd, Writer[?]

LIFE HISTORY

OF

A. G. (GUS) HARTRIDGE, JACKSONVILLE LAWYER.

Mr. Hartridge seems very well preserved for his age. He is a rather large man, weighs 205 pounds, and is a little over six feet tall. He will reach his "three-score and ten" in May of this year, and since he retired two years ago from the active [practice?] of his profession, has been engaged in taking care of the rental service of the six-story Hilderbrandt Building, where his office is located on the second floor. We had a 3:30 appointment, and as I stepped off the elevator, he was there to greet me and conduct me to his office down the hall.

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There were no loose papers on the desk where he seated himself, inviting me to take a chair on the opposite side. All around was neatness, cleanliness and order. Only a 1939 calendar, with large block figures, and no illustrations hung on the wall; there were no pictures or mirrors. A typewriter desk was to his left in the corner by the window in the western wall, the machine, which he himself uses to make out contracts and conduct any correspondence necessary in his position, was covered; the files were closed, and he had evidently completed his work for the day, and was ready to talk without interruption.

On addressing him, I noticed he was slightly deaf in his left ear, but by raising my voice a little he was able to understand perfectly and rarely asked for a question to be repeated.

"My family were English," Mr. Hartridge said. "My father came to Jacksonville from Madison County, Florida in [1853?]. I was born May 27, 1869. I was educated in the Jacksonville schools and later attended the Citadel Military Academy, in Charleston, South Carolina from which I was graduated.

"Our family home was on the corner of Liberty and [Forcyth?] Streets, which was a popular residence section in the early days.

The house was destroyed with all of our papers and most of our belongings in the great fire of 1901.

"My mother, Mrs. [?]. Hartridge, with Mrs. Aristides Doggett, and Mrs. Alexander Mitchell, started St. Luke's Hospital in Jacksonville. The first building was erected on the corner of Church and Market Streets, but was burned to the ground just before it was completed. The cause of the fire was never determined.

The building was insured, and with this coverage, they built another St. Luke's in the early 1870's on [East?] Duval Street near the end of the present viaduct on that thoroughfare.

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"St. Luke's Hospital in those days was run by Dr. J. D. Mitchell, Mrs. Doggett and my mother, Mrs. [Doggett?] Hartridge .

"Mrs. Alexander Mitchell, a very wealthy and charitably inclined lady came to Jacksonville from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, about this time, and built a beautiful country home 'Villa Alexandria' on the St. Johns River on the south side. She, too, helped with the organization and administration of the hospital affairs.

"Her home was a large, two-story, frame building - nothing elaborate, but most handsomely furnished with expensive draperies, rugs, furniture, paintings and bricabrac from the four corners of the world, for she was a great traveler.

"Once a year Mrs. Mitchell gave a lawn party a [fete?] for the benefit of the hospital. This was the outstanding social event for the citizens of Jacksonville. [Boats?] were chartered and people carried down there for the afternoon and evening. The grounds were illuminated by thousands of Japanese lanterns. A small admission was charged at the landing, 25 cents, and all kinds of articles for sale in booths around the lawn - fancy work, beautifully dressed dolls, pastries, candies, etc. The house was also open, for those who wished to view the inside of the residence.

"There were no electric lights at that time, so the Japanese lanterns were the only means of lighting the grounds, and of course there were no hot dogs or ice-cream cones like we are used to now.

"Several thousand dollars were realized, which was quite a sum for that period, and considering the population of Jacksonville as compared with the present time.

"These three women, Mrs. Mitchell, Mrs. Doggett and Mrs. Hartridge finally found the burden too much for them to handle, and St. Luke's Hospital Association was formed, and the active management turned over to that body. [? ? ? ? ?]

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"There were no trained nurses in those days - they had only practical nurses and volunteers, but almost any woman, it seems, made a capable nurse in her own family and others also, when emergency required. The doctors of Jacksonville gave their services free to the poor. Even the Hospital Association found it rather hard going - not that there was any opposition, people just are not interested and could not sense the need of a hospital.

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"There were three great yellow fever epidemics - one in 1857, another in 1858, and the last one in 1888. I heard a great deal about them, especially the last one, although we were not in the city at the time. Residents, not knowing of course, that yellow fever was propagated by certain types of mosquitoes, thought the weather had something to do with the contagion, and those who could afford it, absented themselves during the hot weather and until after the first frost, which killing the mosquitoes, naturally made it safe to return.

"Recreation in the early days was confined to dancing, riding and picnicking. The Florida Yacht Club was established in [1878?].

Dances were held regularly every two weeks in the winter time; also there were informal dances each Saturday evening at the St. James Hotel, now the Cohen Store building.

"One enjoyable feature was the moonlight boat-rides on the St. Johns. There were no railroads running up the river, so these boat excursions terminated at Green Cove Springs, Middleburg, and Arlington. Those were also favorite picnic spots.

"In horseback riding, we used to go out some distance on the old plank road towards Lake City, and again on the 10-mile drive around by Talleyrand Avenue along the River and back.

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"The Springfield section from the time of my early boyhood was known as the Jones Plantation. Mr Jones was the grandfather of the late Mr. William Bostwick.

"At Arlington was the Sammis Plantation. Mr. Sammis' wife was an African Princess.

"On the South side of the River were the [Hudnall?] Plantation, Phillips' Plantation - Red Banks - the Hendricks', Hegarths', and the Bigelow's at Strawberry Creek.

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"Mandarin, when I first knew of it, was a series of well-kept estates owned by English people - the Bowdens, Bardins, the James family, and others, and was beautifully developed in bearing orange groves. The big freeze of 1884 or 1885 killed the trees and ruined the orange culture, which had grown to be quite an industry in that section.

"What do I think of Jacksonville? I have always thought it the most wonderful place in the world to live, filled with wonderful people.

And of course, I believe it has a most promising future, its geographical location on the river, and so close to the ocean, makes it valuable for receiving, for shipping, for manufacturing, for travel. In my opinion, it is the most solid place financially and economically in Florida.

"I am in favor of Mr. Roosevelt's policies and programs. I consider him the most wonderful man alive today.

"I practiced law in Jacksonville for six years, was State's Attorney for sixteen years, and for six years afterwards was Judge of the Criminal Court of Palm Beach County. I retired from active practice of law two years ago, but still conduct my office in the rental department here.

"What was my most interesting case? That of the State vs.

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Eddie Pitzler, charged with the killing of Maria de Gatte, a beautiful Cuban girl. The murder was committed one evening in 1895 on 16th Street, which was then not in the corporate limits of the city of Jacksonville. The girl was a native of Jacksonville, the daughter of G. / de Gatte who owned and operated / De Gatte's Cigar Factory here.

The boy and girl were sweethearts and the evidence, all circumstantial, indicated a violent lover's quarrel induced by jealousy 6 on the part of the young man. The girl had been deliberately shot.

There was no question but that Pitzler was guilty of the crime with which he was charged, but he was freed on perjured testimony - a woman testified he was at her home when the crime was committed, and we were unable to shake her testimony.

"The late Senator Fletcher was associated with me in the prosecution, also Col. A. W. Cockrell.

"Pitzler's lawyers were Col. Alexander St. Clair Abrams, Frank [Pepe?], and Dan Campbell.

"The trial lasted for three weeks and created intense excitement.

Women brought their lunch, so they would not lose their seats at the noon-time intermission. The boy was good looking, and was the recipient of flowers and other tokens of admiration from the ladies. They considered me a heartless, inhuman prosecutor, and I remember," he said chuckling softly to himself, "two of these Jacksonville women who were constant attendants at the trial, did not speak to me for two years afterward."

"Both the Pitzler and DeGatte families left Jacksonville immediately after the case was closed."

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Asked about laws, Mr. Hartridge said: "We have too many laws, far too many. A good many of them should be repealed entirely, and others amended."

As to hobbies, "I like hunting," he said, "but I am also a devotee of fishing - deep-sea fishing off the Florida coast, the best sport in the world."

Mr. Hartridge remarked that his family had accumulated a great deal of historical matter, papers, etc., but all of these were lost in the fire of 1901. The only things of importance saved were a silver service of considerable value, and the family portraits of his father, mother and grandmother.